Chapter 7
Lessons from America: A Comparative Perspective on the Collegial Tradition

Introduction

In spite of the misgivings that have been expressed regarding the current health of the US system of higher education (Douglass, 2006 and 2007), there is little doubt that the central characteristics of the US model are widely admired (Bassett & Tapper, 2009: 127–129). In terms of undergraduate numbers, the United States established the first system of mass higher education. It is a highly diversified model with a plurality of institutional missions. Furthermore, it is the prime example of a model that depends for its sustenance upon a mix of public and private funding. Finally, it contributes many members to that elite 'world-class' sector of higher education, which several nations are anxious to see their leading universities join (Palfreyman & Tapper, 2009: 203–218).

It is somewhat ironic, therefore, to discover that there should be such a persistent attempt, in the words of Duke, 'to import Oxbridge' (Duke, 1996). As can be illustrated, it is a fascination that can be almost irrational in its intensity and expectations.

> Oxford is enough to take one's heart by storm . . . I am afraid that if there were a place for me here, America would only see me again to sell the house, to fetch you and the children (Woodrow Wilson, President of Princeton and then of the United States – as quoted in Tapper & Palfreyman, 2000: 59).

> Pomona might develop into a "group of institutions divided into small colleges – somewhat on the Oxford type. . . In this way, I hope to preserve the inestimable *personal* values of the small college while securing the resources of a university" (James Blaisdell, president of Pomona from 1910 and the inspiration for the foundation of the Claremont Colleges – as quoted in Duke, 1996: 128).

It would not be too difficult to provide numerous quotes expressing parallel sentiments. However, it is critical to place them in their historical context and to explore the rocky road from what are essentially expressions of deep personal sentiment to concrete policy development.

It is scarcely surprising that the American colonies should look to England for models of higher education to emulate, although it probably makes more sense to trace particular links, above all to the Ivy League universities in view of their

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longevity and their historical ties to regional class elites (Karabel, 2006). However, the Oxbridge input has to be weighed against the very significant influence exerted by the Scottish and German legacies combining, respectively, traditions of personal and community betterment with the pursuit of research. More significantly, as Oxbridge's acolytes were sometimes painfully made aware, ideas and values have to be translated into practice. The European models had to be restructured to fit the American context, which meant being receptive to the local social environment as well as engaging in complex and protracted institutional haggling. The European experience of higher education has been refashioned, and the American university has been forged in America, not Europe (Rudolph, 1990: 90–91).

In our second chapter we claimed that there are four paramount dimensions to the collegial tradition: the collegiate university, donnish dominion, intellectual collegiality, and commensality. This chapter will focus predominantly on the first and fourth dimensions. The initial goal is to explore why collegiate universities have failed to flourish in the United States, although the conclusion will be more equivocal than this bold statement suggests. The second section argues that commensality, in the form of the residential college, is integral to the American interpretation of collegiality. The intention is to explore what this means and to account for the strength of its appeal. It will also be necessary to incorporate one critical dimension of intellectual collegiality, which is the long-established (if waning) American commitment to providing a liberal undergraduate education. Colleges and a liberal education have been linked in the American model in, broadly speaking, a parallel fashion to the marrying of tutorial teaching to an Oxbridge undergraduate education. While tutorial teaching has been perceived as integral to Oxbridge's broader socio-cultural role, so a liberal education performs the same function in American higher education. It embraces a commitment to a broad experience of undergraduate education, both academically and socially.

The chapter, therefore, purposefully fails to cover all the dimensions of collegiality but there are good reasons for this. With reference to Oxbridge, we examined (albeit sceptically) the claim that their colleges have helped to stimulate cross-disciplinary research. It would seem inappropriate to follow such a trail within the American tradition given the dominance of the graduate and professional schools. Indeed, the rise of the research university strongly influenced the overall development of higher education in the United States by reshaping its central purposes (Veysey, 1965: 121–179; Geiger, Colbeck, & Williams, 2007). Its growing strength in the nineteenth century, with John Hopkins University to the fore, underwrote the move from a system dominated by the college to one that was essentially the preserve of the university. Rhodes scholars may have returned to America for the most part enamoured of the charms of Oxbridge but this was dwarfed by the impact of those who had travelled to Germany in the latter part of the nineteenth century to seek a postgraduate education dependent upon scholarly research.

Of greater significance is that the chapter does not address in depth the question of donnish dominion. Given the diversity in the character of American higher education, including its multiple origins then, not surprisingly, there has been considerable variation in the scope of the academic input into institutional governance

with the idea of 'shared governance', although in decline, underwriting the dominant model (Rothblatt, 2007a: 446). What is particularly interesting is that the trend in the pattern of governance appears to be broadly similar in the United Kingdom and the United States, with the latter providing the lead.

In the chapter on 'the managerial revolution' in British higher education we examined the rise and decline of the power of the academic estate in the governance of British universities since 1945, with Oxford and Cambridge proving to be fortified bastions of donnish dominion – even if the cracks are starting to appear. The chapter analysed a reshaping process driven by institutional expansion and increasing structural complexity, state pressure, the need to augment funding through entrepreneurial activities, the greater intensity of market forces and changes in academic culture.

Richard Chait has presented a powerful portrayal of parallel trends in the United States taking Jencks and Riesman's *The Academic Revolution* (1968) as his starting point:

> A little more than thirty years ago, Jencks and Riesman (1968) announced the arrival of the 'academic revolution,' a term intended to convey a profound transformation of American higher education. At the heart of the revolution was 'the rise to power of the academic profession' . . . 'The professors . . . won the war' over curriculum, course content, selection of colleagues and senior administrators, and meritocratic standards for admissions and graduation (Chait, 2002: 293).

Chait then goes on to chart the subsequent steady decline in academic authority, not only in relation to other campus interests but also in response to the steady incorporation of the university into the economic structure of the wider society. The most powerful expression of this thesis is to be found in that body of research, which has examined comparatively the rise of 'academic capitalism' and assessed its impact upon the character of academic labour (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004).

But the picture, as in the United Kingdom, is not one of unmitigated doom and gloom. Even Chait records that academics still tend to like their jobs and believe they work in essentially collegial institutions, even if the realities of the changing higher education environment make this increasingly difficult (Chait, 2002: 306–308). Moreover, the new model of institutional governance may invoke at the very least acquiescence if it is infused with the devolution of authority, policy consultation and styles of leadership and management that embrace rather than dictate. Dill (viewing the issue comparatively) has called for a renewed strategy of academic self-regulation in which there is a reaffirmation of the commitment to collegial values (Dill, 2005: 184–190), whereas Burgan has implied that the shift in the balance of power on campuses is to some extent due to the tendency of the academic faculty to become actively engaged only in crisis situations rather than playing the role of 'continuously involved citizens' (Burgan, 2006: 192–194). One is reminded of the spasmodic interventions of Oxford's Congregation: with respect, for example, to the award of an honorary degree to Mrs Thatcher and the recent attempts of Vice-Chancellor John Hood to increase the presence of laypersons on Oxford's Council. To remain continuously engaged, however, means a commitment of time

and energy, which the individual academic may feel are better spent in pursuing other goals.

There are those who argue that the ousting of Harvard's President, Larry Summers, was not so much the consequence of the negative impact of the particular issues in which he was embroiled, but stemmed more from the fact that these occurred within the framework of a continuously abrasive leadership style. Apparently he had failed to act with sufficient collegiality in a university that had a devolved structure of authority, including the devolution of financial control (Bowley, 2006, May 13/14; Phillips, 2006, March 10; Ryan, 2006, March 24).

Moreover, and more positively, Hardy's study on how Canadian universities handled retrenchment in response to budget cuts suggests that collegial procedures of decision-making can play a significant part in securing long-term institutional welfare (Hardy, 1996). Nonetheless, for individual academics to be enmeshed in the formal decision-making process does not within itself mean that we are observing a collegiate university at work, but it does suggest the presence of a collegial culture. Moreover, it may provide guidelines for the construction of a viable model of governance and administration in the age of mass higher education – continuous collegial engagement embracing the different interests within the academy.

The intention, therefore, is to examine how those parts of the jigsaw (colleges, commensality and a liberal education) that we are piecing together will enhance the understanding of the collegial tradition. In an interesting review of Duke's *Importing Oxbridge* Leslie has implied that a valuable contribution to interpreting the development of higher education in America would be to discern precisely what has been the impact of Oxbridge rather than to focus specifically upon failed attempts to import it (Leslie, 1998). This would require a detailed historical analysis that is beyond the scope of this chapter but by introducing a more rounded understanding of collegiality this chapter should help to establish the preconditions for a considered move in this direction.

The Beckoning Promise of the Collegiate University

What does it mean 'to import Oxbridge' or to construct a collegiate university that claims to be replicating the Oxbridge model of the collegiate university? In Chapter 2, we argued that the idea of the collegiate university, as exemplified by Oxford in particular, evolves around the entwining of a pattern of socio-cultural variables and a structure of governance and administration that defines the relationship between university and colleges in the performance of key institutional functions. The structure has a number of layers:

Functions that are the responsibility of individual colleges
Functions that are managed by inter-collegiate bodies
Functions that are the responsibility of the university
Functions that are managed through the interaction of the university and the colleges, with an increasing emphasis on the need to co-ordinate university and inter-collegiate decision-making within the framework of joint committees

And, as we have discussed, in recent years there has been a steady augmentation in the decision-making authority of the university within both Oxford and Cambridge.

But what are to count as key institutional functions? Within the Oxbridge model one would point to college control of both those who are admitted as undergraduates and those who are appointed to college fellowships. Admission of undergraduates has a large element of inter-collegiate cooperation built into the process, and the appointment of college fellows at Oxford almost always incorporates a university voice in the proceedings, whereas at Cambridge the university makes academic appointments with the colleges then selecting whom they will offer fellowships. The second key function is the continuing responsibility of the colleges for undergraduate teaching, although again there are both critical inter-collegiate (colleges need to organise their teaching resources cooperatively) and university (the departmental control of laboratories, lecture rooms and responsibility for examinations and awarding degrees) inputs.

Although the balance in responsibility for these two tasks may be shifting, there are two support mechanisms that help to sustain its relative stability. First, university governance at Oxbridge is still infused with the ethos of donnish dominion, which means the college tutors retain a powerful voice – in fact, more than a voice, because they continue to fulfil vital roles, as well as having significant committee representation, within the university structures. Second, although the colleges vary considerably in terms of their wealth, many of them retain enviable financial resources – endowment income, tuition fees for the teaching they provide and even their embracing of entrepreneurial activities. Although some voices have called for the pooling of endowment income (not surprisingly, resisted by the richer colleges), a taxation model operates whereby the richer colleges provide (with varying degrees of enthusiasm) support for the sustenance of the college system as a whole.

The above short section encapsulates (drawing heavily upon the Oxbridge experience) our interpretation of the collegiate university. The issue is to what extent the long-running American fascination with Oxbridge has led to the foundation, or redevelopment of existing institutions, that replicate these characteristics. If this is not the case, can we nonetheless discern a viable American model of collegiality, one that is centred on socio-cultural values (the other critical dimension of the collegiate university as we have defined it) as opposed to modes of governance and administration underwritten by the financial inputs that oil the machinery of shared responsibilities?

Our exploration of the American flirtation with the collegiate university is based on three targets. First, there are the Ivy League universities with particular reference to Harvard, Yale and Princeton (the other Ivy League universities are Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth and the University of Pennsylvania – Geiger, 2009: 281). Second, there is the University of California at Santa Cruz, which is one of the campuses of the University of California. Third, we have included several models of inter-collegiate cooperation: the Claremont Colleges of southern California, the Five Colleges, Inc., which incorporates five institutions located in New England, and the almost informal cooperation that has developed between Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges since the 1930s. Thus, three very different models of higher education are

on view: well-established elite universities with an international status; a comparatively recent foundation (Santa Cruz was founded in the mid-1960s) created with the purposeful intention of giving it a unique brand within the array of the University of California's campuses – indeed a bold venture for a publicly funded institution; and the comparatively small (within the American context) of essentially liberal arts colleges. These are the institutions that have received some analytical exposure and provide an interesting range of institutional profiles. The dominant consensus is that, regardless of the fascination with Oxbridge, none of these differing models of higher education have succeeded in creating collegiate universities. Will our analysis sustain this interpretation?

The Ivy League Triumvirate: Harvard, Yale and Princeton

Duke records how during the Progressive Era (late nineteenth/early twentieth century) both Harvard and Princeton contemplated the creation of residential colleges (1996: 65–73, 78–90). For some (notably Lawrence Lowell, who became President of Harvard in 1909, and Woodrow Wilson of Princeton) the inspiration was Oxbridge, although it is difficult to discern any serious intention to replicate the collegiate model. The would-be reformers were reacting to the fact that both institutions, strongly influenced by the German model of the university, had moved significantly in the direction of becoming research universities. They wanted a stronger focus upon undergraduate education with colleges providing a measure of social cohesion, enhancing the socio-cultural dimensions of an undergraduate education and creating a more academic environment than the prevailing residential arrangements. As Duke's narration illustrates, at both universities the reform impetus (although not without its achievements) ran into the ground, petering out in the face of internal opposition and the lack of financial resources – both the difficulty of generating new earmarked income and/or securing the redistribution of current income. Thus Harvard College remained essentially unreformed, and Princeton retained its undergraduate eating clubs (for a concise, lucid account of Wilson's impact on Princeton, see Veysey, 1965: 341–348).

The subsequent benevolence of Edward Harkness resolved the issue of financial backing, and in the 1930s residential colleges that were founded at Yale and Harvard College acquired its houses. In a succinct summarising evaluation Rudolph has written:

> The great monuments to the return of Aristotle, that symbolized the revolt against the university idea, were the benefactions of Edward S. Harkness, which provided Harvard in 1928 with its house system and Yale in 1930 with its system of colleges. The Harvard houses and Yale colleges recognized the responsibility of the two great old colonial institutions to inculcate patterns of social conduct and moral behavior and . . . to provide encouragement for those collegial values that Harvard and Yale had once so nobly sustained (Rudolph, 1990: 461).

But references to the idea of a collegiate university are conspicuous by their absence, with the focus directed at the residential colleges and the desire to shape moral and social values.

The University of California at Santa Cruz

Perhaps the most significant link between, on the one hand, the University of California at Santa Cruz (UCSC) and, on the other hand, Harvard, Yale and Princeton is that they each belong to very powerful research clusters – UCSC to the University of California and the latter three to the Ivy League. In other critical respects – sources of funding, dates of their foundation and national and international reputations, they are quite distinctive. And yet it is this one common denominator linking Santa Cruz to the Ivy League universities that has made it particularly difficult for it to develop as a collegiate university.

Clark Kerr's greatest legacy was his leadership in bringing California's Master Plan for higher education to fruition. Whatever the current woes of the university few would doubt the magnitude of this achievement, which makes Kerr one of the greatest American university presidents. Kerr also played a leading role in the foundation of the University of California at Santa Cruz. In a moving obituary to Kerr, Sheldon Rothblatt has written:

> The Swarthmore ideal of liberal education with a stress on ethical conduct remained with him forever [Kerr was an undergraduate at Swarthmore], best illustrated by his dream of making the new University of California at Santa Cruz, which he founded, into a west coast version of collegiate Cambridge University. What he had in mind was a publicly-financed "Swarthmore under the redwoods" (Rothblatt, 2003b, December 1).

But the judgement on UCSC would be far more equivocal than that accorded the Master Plan. Rothblatt reflected at a later date: 'There are indeed many mansions in the multiversity – [which is should be remembered was a concept popularised by Kerr – *The Uses of the University*, 1963] – but the collegiate one came up against formidable fiscal, political and demographic odds' (Rothblatt, 2006: 27).

Grant and Riesman (1978: 253–290) outlined the considerable early promise of UCSC: high demand for undergraduate places in colleges that combined residence along with a strong commitment to the fostering of academic values through close faculty–student intellectual contact, made possible by small-group teaching, the advocacy of a liberal education with significant college control of the curriculum and the sponsoring of a range of socio-cultural activities. But from the beginning there were in-built tensions that would inevitably come to the fore as the first blush of vitality faded. It was always expected that Santa Cruz would become a large university with a projected student population of 27,500 as it grew out of its undergraduate base and started to incorporate professional and graduate schools. The hope was that Santa Cruz would act as a model in which the spirit of a collegiate undergraduate university could interact positively with the ethos of graduate and professional schools (Duke, 1996: 144–145).

Rothblatt has written:

> About a year before his death, Kerr asked me to write a history of the ‘failure’ of the Santa Cruz campus. I was not able to undertake the project. But I also did not regard the campus as unsuccessful, but I understood that a fully collegiate public sector university was Kerr’s very special lifelong dream. . . .But as I saw the situation, a collection of Swarthmores could not really be incorporated into a multiversity research University federation (Rothblatt, 2007b: 297–298).

Although the campus may not be judged as ‘unsuccessful’ (and we look forward with anticipation to Rothblatt’s analysis and evaluation), it most certainly has not lived up to its early promise, becoming more akin to the other campuses of the University of California rather than developing into a distinctive collegiate university.

To a considerable extent the continuing influence of the colleges in the Oxbridge model (and both Oxford and Cambridge are also multiversity research models) has been dependent upon the range of resources they possess: their corporate independence, their financial muscle, their political influence within the university and their substantial international reputations (which, to a measure, they possess independently of the university). In nearly all respects Santa Cruz’s colleges could not compare in these terms: no separate legal identity, no real independent financial base, a political influence and reputation within the Santa Cruz campus but little clout in the wider University of California and certainly no established international reputation, although generating considerable national and international interest. Over time the college control of the curriculum waned (and along with it the commitment to a liberal education), while the pressures of belonging to an international research university inevitably impacted upon faculty culture.

It may be regrettable but in terms of both promotion and standing within the academic discipline, what increasingly counted was the quality and quantity of research output rather than a campus reputation for commitment to teaching. In this respect the crucial difference between Santa Cruz and Oxbridge is that the collegiate tradition, to which quality undergraduate education is critical, was established long before Oxford and Cambridge acquired international research reputations. But that said, it is increasingly a moot point whether Oxbridge can continue to balance the respective halves of its bifurcated identity.

Rhoades has raised the possibility of universities seeking to establish and sustain what he terms in his jargon, ‘strategic, sustainable, synergistic niches’ (Rhoades, 2007: 131–141). And with explicit reference to UC Santa Cruz he wrote:

> From the standpoint of UC Santa Cruz, subsequent efforts to enhance prestige by modelling patterns being pursued by other public research universities might seem to make sense.

However, he continued by proposing a possible alternative scenario:

> Or would the system, the state, and prospective students, be better served by Santa Cruz pursuing its historically distinctive culture and the interdisciplinary programmatic emphases in the social sciences and humanities (Rhoades, 2007: 122)?

The problems with Rhoades' alternative strategy are self-evident: it is a precarious path to pursue (at best a calculated risk, at worse a gamble), and in the case of UC Santa Cruz public funding would have underwritten such an initiative, so bringing into play considerable political risks.

Developments at Santa Cruz made it difficult to sustain the initial buoyant mood. Duke notes that in the early years '. . . a spirit of optimism prevailed at Santa Cruz, fuelled by the opening of new colleges and healthy growth in enrolment' (Duke, 1996: 163). However, this bright start was rather swiftly punctured by both flattening enrolment (within the California state system of higher education Santa Cruz was especially hit hard) and a comparative decline in the Scholastic Aptitude Test scores of the student body (Duke, 1996: 163). So, there were fewer, and formally less well-qualified, applicants.

In the absence of hard research evidence, it is difficult to make categorical judgements but it is possible that the original ethos of Santa Cruz was increasingly out of tune with the leaner times of the 1970s. Thus the market was passing judgement on courses that were credited with a pass/fail rather than a numerical grade and on a curriculum that may have offered an enlightened liberal education but was supposedly short on inculcating marketable skills. Of course, there may have been a sufficiently large niche market to have sustained the early ethos but this would have meant abandoning the original development plan that envisaged considerable growth, incorporating both graduate and professional studies, but with no guarantee of success. One is reminded of the saga of the new British universities founded in the 1960s. The fortunes of the University of Warwick, which from its early years followed the solid path of collaboration with local – often business – interests, and developed a strong entrepreneurial culture, waxed while those of the early leader – the University of Sussex – with its (now substantially modified) new map of learning, radical political image (now vanished) and 'trendy' reputation (in terminal decline) waned.

With respect to the University of California at Santa Cruz it is likely that the inherent tensions within the model would sooner or later have come to the fore. However, it was difficult to predict that California's higher education system would be rent so soon after Santa Cruz's foundation by political turmoil and financial constraints. This was swiftly to become a far from sympathetic environment in which to embed a radical experiment in public higher education. In view of this context it is perhaps more appropriate to celebrate Kerr's vision than to carp at the limitations of its realisation.

From Inter-collegiate Cooperation to the Collegiate University?

The analysis so far has centred on powerful universities that, under the banner of the collegial impulse, took up the challenge of modifying their identities. At Harvard and Yale the outcome was the founding of residential houses/colleges with the goal of refurbishing the quality of undergraduate education. At Santa Cruz the chosen policy path was the construction of a collegiate university within the framework

of one of the nation's (indeed, one of the world's) leading research universities. In these cases the process of change represented a policy move initiated essentially by powerful individuals who held a prominent university position – invariably the most powerful position. With respect to the possibility of a shift from inter-collegiate cooperation to the emergence of a collegiate university, the process is apparently reversed – the move is from the periphery to the centre. Is this a more viable process for creating a collegiate university?

Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges

The links between Bryn Mawr and Haverford colleges are the least institutionalised of the three examples of inter-collegiate cooperation we will investigate, and both colleges also have separate academic ties to Swarthmore College and the University of Pennsylvania. A Two-College Committee on Academic Cooperation (with five representatives from each college) acts as the body that oversees the Bryn Mawr–Haverford ties. These links are essentially of an academic character (with both joint departments and counterpart departments), but they have broader policy implications. In its overview of 'Agreements on Two-College Cooperation' the Bryn Mawr *Handbook for Faculty* states:

> As part of the new institutional relationships, the two colleges agree to full consultation with each other at all appropriate faculty, student and administrative levels before any decision is made concerning policies which will have a significant effect on the other college. Such policies will include, but will not be limited to standards and policies of admission, curriculum changes and staffing decisions. Consultations should seek agreement and not mere notification (Bryn Mawr College, 2009, May 19).

But tellingly, the Handbook continues by making the point that '. . . each institution will retain the authority to make its own final decisions as neither institution seeks veto power over the decisions of the other'. The limits to inter-collegial cooperation were vividly illustrated by Haverford's decision to admit women, which Bryn Mawr (with only women students) felt would be inimical to its interests. Oxford's North Commission of Inquiry (which reviewed inter-collegiate cooperation in the United States) had noted Haverford initial genuflection to the wishes of Bryn Mawr, concluding that, in spite of the relationship lacking a formal legal structure, 'the affairs of the two colleges are very closely inter-connected' (University of Oxford, 1997b: 290). But apparently not so closely entwined that when the stakes are high inter-collegial cooperation will break down. It should be noted, however, that the very same issue was probably handled with even less dignity at the University of Oxford for all its claims to be a collegiate university (Tapper & Palfreyman, 2000: 87–89).

But the Bryn Mawr–Haverford alliance has more to do with very practical concerns that are managed pragmatically rather than representing a move towards the creation of a collegiate university. The two colleges maintain their independent legal status, and there is no authoritative overarching body to establish a policy direction

that runs counter to powerful collegiate interests. The emphasis is entirely on consultation and consensus building within and between the colleges. Conflicts may emerge as the policy-making process unfolds but this is far from the kind of tensions that can be generated when different institutions with possibly conflicting interests interact within a federal system of governance. The parties to inter-collegiate cooperation can simply walk away but in the collegiate university they cannot.

In its Periodic Review Report, 2004, Haverford College made the ambiguous statement, 'We think that, when appropriate, we should look beyond cooperation towards the rewards of genuine collaboration, especially between counterpart departments and other programs with significant possibilities for collaborative gain' (Haverford College, 2004: 75). But there is no suggestion of proceeding on any other basis than through consensus building between equal parties. Thus, inter-collegiality appears to have worked for the most part to the benefit of both Bryn Mawr and Haverford, and there is no reason to suppose that it will develop into a different mode of governance.

Although Haverford and Bryn Mawr do not have a federal model of governance, there is an unwritten constitution guiding the policy-making process in a manner that sustains the continuing cooperation of the two colleges. It is interesting to contemplate how much this unwritten constitution owes to the Quaker origins of the colleges. Does this reinforce the framework of common values that underwrites their inter-collegiate cooperation? In a parallel line of argument, Burton Clark claimed that the colleges of Antioch, Reed and Swarthmore had created 'an organizational saga or legend' within the world of the liberal arts colleges (Clark, 1970: 233–262). But, as the tensions generated by the admission of women undergraduates to Haverford College demonstrates, even the strongest of inter-collegiate relations are insufficient to curtail the interests of the individual colleges when the stakes are sufficiently high.

The Five Colleges, Inc.

In a brief overview of its mission and history, the Five Colleges, Inc., describes itself as

> Five Colleges, Incorporated is a non-profit educational consortium established in 1965 to promote the broad educational cultural objectives of its member institutions, which include four private, liberal arts colleges and the Amherst campus of the state university. The consortium is the outgrowth of a highly successful collaboration in the 1950s among Amherst College, Mount Holyoke College, Smith College, and the University of Massachusetts Amherst, which resulted in the founding of a fifth institution, Hampshire College, in 1970 (Five Colleges, Incorporated, 2009, May 20).

The statement continues that the cohesiveness of the consortium is favoured by their proximity to one another in the Connecticut River Valley (Pioneer Valley) of western Massachusetts and 'their commitment to the liberal arts and to undergraduate education' (Five Colleges, Incorporated, 2009, May 20). Of course, it would be naive to ignore the extent to which the cohesiveness is also underwritten by the

practical payoffs for both students (able to select from a wider range of academic programmes) and faculty (the possibility of plugging into a stronger institutional research culture emerging out of collegial cooperation).

As is the case with Bryn Mawr College and Haverford College, each of the five colleges has a board of trustees, which is its governing body. However, the central co-ordinating body (that is the Five Colleges, Incorporated) is markedly more developed than that of Bryn Mawr and Haverford's Two-College Committee on Academic Cooperation. This reflects the greater longevity of the consortium, its larger membership (therefore the inevitability of a more complex co-ordination process) and the more extensive range of cooperative activities. The latter, besides academic cross-fertilisation (including the two Five College departments of astronomy and dance), incorporates transportation, the sharing of library resources, meal plans and a common set of disciplinary regulations. The statement on 'governance and administration' estimates that 'at the present time, approximately eighty groups are engaged in cooperative planning with the support of the Five Colleges staff' (Five Colleges, Incorporated, 2009a, May 20).

The key issue is whether this administrative structure is no more than that, and Oxford's North Commission concluded that it undertook 'far more of an administrative rather than a decision-making function' (University of Oxford, 1997b: 289). The membership of the two governing bodies of the Five Colleges, Inc. (Board of Directors and the Deans Council) along with the main officers (Principal Business Officers and Principal Student Affairs Officers) is drawn more or less equally from the five colleges (essentially one representative from each college) buttressed by the Five Colleges, Inc., senior staff. This is suggestive of a decision-making model designed to enhance consensus building, which, although a key collegial value, is very different from establishing a structure of governance that underpins a collegiate university.

In 1999 The Five Colleges, Inc., hosted a conference under the heading 'Cultures of Cooperation: The Future of Consortia in Higher Education'. The proceedings of the conference contained a precis of a review directed specifically at Five Colleges, Inc., which concluded that it was in part ' . . . a vigorous "sixth entity" with a constituency of its own, and an array of semi-permanent institutions and programs' (Five Colleges, Inc., 1999: 47). Moreover, at the time approximately one-third of its annual budget of some $4.5 million a year came from a combination of external grants and endowment income rather than from the colleges (Five Colleges, Inc., 1999: 46). But in relation to the incomes of the individual colleges, this is a small sum. Moreover, while it may facilitate the emergence of new programmes and ensure that they operate efficiently, it controls no core functions (admissions, residence, teaching, examination or research) that are the lifeblood of higher education. Of course at both Oxford and Cambridge for centuries the two universities were also very weak bodies, basically creatures that responded to the beck and call of the colleges, with – until comparatively recently – the 2-year tenure of the vice-chancellor's office rotating in turn from one head of college to the next.

It is possible therefore that the balance of authority between the five colleges and the Five Colleges, Inc., could change over time but it is difficult to see what

is the dynamic that would undermine the current structure. At Oxbridge it was a combination of university control of the examination process (a critical leverage as the completion of a degree programme became the central route for bourgeois class reproduction) and purposeful state intervention, in the form of royal commissions, designed to redress the balance of institutional power, a shift buttressed by the increasing infusion of public funding in the twentieth century.

The Five Colleges, Inc., is a monument to the idea that cooperation can stimulate cross-institutional benefits. It is cooperation that is driven by initiatives from below rather than led from above. While it may change how institutions interact with one another, there is no suggestion that a mode of governance with a federal distribution of authority is required to ensure its effective functioning. It does not challenge the balance of power. Indeed, it implies that the exercise of power, with the attendant echoes of coercion, is an inappropriate approach for effective institutional governance. Consensus building, undoubtedly constructed with the aid of competent and committed leadership, is perceived as the wisest way forward. At best we are observing a weak model of confederation, more one of administration than of governance, which clearly suits the interests of the individual colleges. Although there are clearly shared values across the consortium, it is the practical advantages of collaboration that provide the real glue.

The Claremont Colleges

The Claremont Colleges are composed of three institutional layers that differ from one another but have clear functional links:

1. The five undergraduate colleges (with date of foundation): Pomona College (1887), Scripps College (1926), Claremont McKenna College (1946), Harvey Mudd College (1955) and Pitzer College (1963).
2. The two graduate institutions (with date of foundation): Claremont Graduate University (1925) and Kreck Graduate Institute of Applied Life Sciences (1997).
3. The consortium's support centre: Claremont University Consortium, which was founded as 'a free-standing educational support institution of the Claremont Colleges', picking up the responsibilities assigned to a prior support centre (Claremont University Consortium, 2009, May 13).

Of the three collegial consortia analysed in this chapter, Claremont is the one that genuflects most explicitly to Oxford, and its various websites are testimony to its apparent influence. The Claremont Graduate University (which refers to the Claremont Colleges as 'Oxford in the Orange Groves') notes that 'Oxford was the explicit model for the Claremont Colleges'. The founding president of what is now Claremont Graduate University, James A. Blaisdell, sought to emulate the eminence and the experience, even 'the beauty of Oxford'. And, to quote Blaisdell directly, 'My own very deep hope is that instead of one great undifferentiated university, we might have a group of institutions divided into small colleges – somewhat of an

Oxford type – around a library and other utilities which they would use in common' (Claremont Graduate University, 2009, May 13).

Partially, as a reflection of Blaisdell's potent input, the Claremont Colleges are more explicitly upfront in the expression of the values for which they stand. The Claremont University Consortium (CUC), with a governing board known as the Board of Overseers, performs parallel functions to the Five Colleges, Inc., and Bryn Mawr–Haverford's Two-College Committee on Academic Cooperation. However, there is a more explicit emphasis on the virtues of smallness. Caps have been imposed upon college student numbers, and Article 2 of the Constitution of the Claremont Colleges states one of its objectives is 'to maintain colleges and other educational institutions of limited enrolment' (CUC, 2009a, May 13). Furthermore, there is an advocacy of close faculty–student engagement through tutorial teaching, a stress on the importance of the physical environment including the architectural landscape and a commitment 'to found and develop such new colleges and educational institutions or programs as sound educational plans and new resources make practicable, and to acquire and hold land to accommodate the founding of such institutions' (CUC, 2009a, May 13).

The fact that the individual undergraduate colleges at Claremont have developed reasonably differentiated academic programmes means that there is somewhat less emphasis on the academic inter-collegiate cooperation that has driven the other consortia. Moreover, having a central body that has as one of its purposes a remit 'to accommodate the founding of new colleges' makes Claremont distinctive, although it should be noted that Hampshire College owes its very existence to the efforts of the four other colleges within the Five Colleges, Inc. But the presence of Claremont's CUC does shed an interesting light on the idea of the collegiate university – a central administrative body with an important policy remit. It would suggest that possibly the CUC has the *potential* to reshape the structure of the Claremont Colleges by least taking the initiative in the creation of new colleges.

At the centre of the Claremont Colleges there are two critical bodies, which have formal constitutional authority. First, the Council of the Claremont Colleges (composed of the presidents of all member institutions) provides 'policy guidance to and operational oversight of the CUC chief executive officer' with specific responsibilities for developing and overseeing the joint academic programmes, establishing budgets for the central programmes and services and creating the formula that will determine how the costs of those programmes and services are to be distributed (Constitution of the Claremont Colleges, Article 1 V, Clause 5 – CUC, 2009a, May 13).

Second, the Board of Overseers, which is in effect the governing body specifically of the CUC, has at least as much formal power as the Council. It has the authority to return to the Council for further consideration its recommendations on how the costs of central services and common programmes are to be shared and – more significantly – has a central planning role. Furthermore, although the operational culture of the Claremont Colleges clearly favours consensual decision-making, the Board of Overseers can decide certain issues by voting: '. . . a binding vote of the Board must include an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the constituent

overseers on such matters' (Constitution of the Claremont Colleges, Article IV – CUC, 2009a, May 13).

There is, therefore, a stronger centre to the Claremont Colleges than is true of the other consortia in the shape of the Claremont University Consortium with its Board of Overseers. Nonetheless, its day-to-day remit is confined essentially to managing the shared programmes and services while its planning role is couched within this framework. There is the rather grandiose exception of possessing the authority to initiate steps towards founding new colleges, but this, although clearly part of the history of the Claremont Colleges, could not be described as a frequent occurrence. Beyond the stage of initiation it is difficult to conceive of a new college coming to fruition without a broad support base across the whole college system. Indeed, even the initiation stage is likely to reflect the presence of that broad support base.

The Claremont Colleges, therefore, exhibit an interesting distribution of institutional responsibilities in which a centralised administrative core has at least the potential to shape Claremont's future development. Moreover, with respect to the collaborative programmes negotiations are necessary to steer a path through the presence of the separate colleges, which will have interests of their own that have to be accommodated, and the CUC is ideally placed to secure the requisite accommodation. However, although it is right to stress that the departments within colleges (as in all the consortia) control the non-collaborative programmes, it is important not to interpret the idea of collegiality too narrowly. Blaisdell did not separate the formal process of learning and teaching from the social milieu of the colleges; these were interactive educative experiences and equally vital to the development of the student. In the words of Duke, 'Blaisdell insisted that a college not steer its students toward definite utilitarian objectives but instead provide them with a "deliberative acquaintance with cosmopolitan knowledge and sympathies before entering on ... intensive training for a life calling". He believed that students' close relationships with college faculty would provide that broad-based education' (Duke, 1996: 132). A strong case can be made out for the argument that at least since the latter half of the nineteenth century this idea has been central to the essence of an undergraduate Oxbridge education.

So, rather than misconceiving the Oxbridge ethos, Blaisdell failed to reproduce a model of the university that replicated Oxford in terms of its structure of governance in which the constituent colleges were bound to a central university. He replicated Oxford in socio-cultural terms, also incorporating a measure of inter-collegiate cooperation, but without creating a collegiate university. The Claremont Colleges, therefore, are in essence similar in character to the Bryn Mawr–Haverford and the Five Colleges, Incorporated consortia. For the most part the consortia are composed of liberal arts colleges, which share a common ideal of undergraduate education and cooperate on a range of administrative and academic matters to further both that ideal and sustain their institutional strength. They do not have a strong centre that has the authority to steer the development of the consortium independently of the individual colleges. The one possible exception to this generalisation is the Claremont University Consortium, but it remains essentially an administrative body. Of course, within the collegiate universities of Oxford and Cambridge one

expects interaction between the colleges and universities to shape their future, but the universities most definitely possess an independent power base. Consequently, the affairs of college and university are intimately entwined, their futures mutually interdependent.

The consortia of American liberal arts colleges are composed of individual institutions that are independent corporate bodies within their own right. They choose the path of inter-collegiate cooperation because its suits their interests and ultimately there are no indivisible links. While the individual colleges may uphold many of the traditional collegial values (as residential colleges with an emphasis on commensality, 'tutorial teaching' and a liberal education), they also have academic departments that manage the core formal business of the college – the conduct of its academic programmes. So, we have institutions that express and sustain collegial values outside the structure of a collegiate university.

The American Collegial Tradition

In his seminal history of American higher education (*The American Colleges and Universities*) Rudolph remarks: 'Imported with so much of everything from England, the collegiate way in America was from the beginning the effort to follow in the New World the pattern of life that had developed at the English colleges' (Rudolph, 1990: 87). However, as Rudolph goes on to show, the Anglicised collegiate way was reshaped by the American experience, which incorporated the old while colouring it in its own national flavour. The consequence was the creation of an educational tradition, which lasted for the best part of a century and still exerts a potent influence upon contemporary ideas and practices in American higher education.

The collegiate way, to use Rudolph's phrase, emerged out of an interesting mix of educational principles responding to social needs while adjusting pragmatically to the contemporary constraints of a rural society (for the most interesting perspectives on this history – besides Rudolph's research – see Burton Clark, 1995; Geiger, 2004b, 2004c: 115–129; Rothblatt, 2003a; Veysey, 1965: 180–251). The churches were the dominant force in establishing the early foundations and, not surprisingly, were keen that their colleges should promote their core values, including the importance of public service. Small colleges provided the ideal context for social control, with the college assuming – undoubtedly with the firm approval of parents – the role of moral guardian. In a nation of farmsteads and small towns colleges were inevitably located in rural areas with the provision of college residence as much a necessity as a means of fashioning student values. The rural idyll and the small college fitted neatly into a national ethos that stressed the virtue of the countryside over the city and of the well-rounded person over the scholar. Of course the reality could be very different: a highly paternalistic environment that induced a dull conformity and dormitory living that did very little to uplift the spirit let alone the mind. Nonetheless, a powerful myth of what constituted a college was embedded deeply in the American understanding of higher education.

The most fascinating aspect of the idea of the college was its commitment to a liberal education, perhaps best defined by what it is not rather than what it is. Due partly to the increasing influence after the Civil War of the German model of the university, the purpose of the university was increasingly defined in terms of the pursuit of academic scholarship, and the collegial ideal was steadily undermined. Colleges gave ground to the universities, as a broad-based liberal undergraduate education retreated in the face of an expanding emphasis on research and professional training. Post-1865 the old-time college was on the wane and yet deep in the psyche of American higher education a legacy is to be found: that universities should be committed to quality undergraduate education, integral to that quality is a liberal education that is enhanced by close tutor–student interaction in the teaching and learning process, and an experience of higher education that embraces more than the classroom for at its best the residential college acts as a positive force in the socialisation of the whole person.

Not surprisingly, this is not an ideal that too many of the old-time colleges lived up to or that too many contemporary higher education institutions would want to sustain. However, as this chapter has discussed, there remains a firm commitment to collegial values within the liberal arts consortia, and the journal *Liberal Education* (published by the Association of American Colleges and Universities) continues to carry a torch for the cause. Moreover, in spite of their reputations as world-class research institutions, the collegial tradition retains a hold on the Ivy League universities. Roger Geiger writes of Dartmouth College that, ‘Dartmouth shares with Cornell a rustic isolation, but takes fierce pride in its resolutely collegiate character, despite recent growth in research’ (Geiger, 2009: 282); and Axtell’s study of Princeton University portrays a university still committed to the core American collegial values, although this is undoubtedly reinforced by its wealth, selective recruitment of faculty and students, its comparatively small size, its narrower research profile (for example, it has neither a medical school nor a law school) and its historically embedded commitment to undergraduate teaching (Axtell, 2006). And not so long ago Harvard set up an enquiry into its undergraduate programmes, with the focus on how to improve the quality and status of undergraduate teaching, which has received considerable publicity (Lewis, 2006; Marcus, 2006, October 13; Rimer, 2007, May 10). What we appear to be experiencing is one of those periodic revivals of the collegial tradition, with its embedded advocacy of a liberal education, although it remains to be seen whether it will match that revival of the Progressive Era, which was so closely associated with Woodrow Wilson’s tenure at Princeton.

Lessons to Be Learnt

With reference to the analysis of the reports that formed the empirical base of his ‘Calling on the Past: The Quest for the Collegiate Ideal’, Rhoades observes:

> A casual reading . . . reveals reformers’ fondness for liberal education. Further there seems to be a validation and promotion of conditions characteristic of selective, private institutions, conditions grounded in the colonial liberal arts colleges (Rhoades, 1990: 515).

And his more detailed reading of the reports confirmed his suspicions (not surprisingly!), although the elite private universities (in addition to the liberal arts colleges) were also favoured in the reports' documentation (Rhoades, 1990: 531).

Rhoades does not castigate the reports for trying 'to import Oxbridge' but rather for their failure to appreciate that American higher education needs to relate to a societal context that has evolved out of all recognition with its past. However, it should be stated that the collegial tradition, incorporating the idea of a liberal education, has much deeper roots than Rhoades implies. It is a widely embedded tradition, not an idea confined to elite liberal arts colleges and universities, although that is where today it may be manifested most forcefully. Moreover, if we take a more rounded view of the collegial tradition, one that focuses upon socio-cultural and pedagogical values, then there are some important overlaps between the Oxbridge legacy and American experience. The precise interpretations may differ in form, because the circumstances in which these took shape contrast so sharply, but there are also some remarkable similarities. But what we do not have in the United States is a model of institutional governance in higher education, essentially federal in nature, which shares power over the central academic functions between a university and its colleges.

Even within the consortia of colleges we do not see the emergence of central bodies, with a power base independent of their colleges, which play a significant role in controlling and developing academic functions. What these bodies do is essentially co-ordinate rather than develop institutional missions. The key parties with respect to academic control and development within the individual colleges are a combination of the academic departments, the plethora of bodies engaged in matters such as 'strategic planning' and those administrative offices (deans' offices) that manage the academic programmes. Ironically, therefore, there is a combination of weak centres within the consortia and weak residential colleges in terms of responsibility for the delivery and development of the core formal academic responsibilities. But this is to define those responsibilities narrowly, which Claremont's founding father, James Blaisdell, for one would fiercely challenge.

One of the central themes of Duke's *Importing Oxbridge* is that those who wanted to recreate Oxbridge within America invariably held only a romantic image of the two collegiate universities. Moreover, they failed to appreciate that the essence of collegiality had been fought over numerous times and consequently was evolving constantly. Far from being practical reformers, they rarely took the trouble to discern in detail how the two universities actually functioned before proceeding with their own schemes (Duke, 1996: 7–8). While there is no reason to doubt Duke's claim that there was much naivety, even foolhardiness, accompanying the romantic illusions, it is important that he should be made aware of the implications of his own analysis. He constructs no explicit understanding of what the collegiate university is and fails to grasp the possibility that it may now function very differently from his own, essentially implicit interpretation. Oxbridge colleges may retain key academic functions but some are considerably more influential, internally and externally, than others. Furthermore, there has been a marked shift in the balance of power within both Oxford and Cambridge, which is a far from recent development. If you examine

teaching, the appointment of faculty, the control of the academic agenda (including the relative balance of undergraduate teaching to research) and the patterns of governance and administration, there has been a steady augmentation in the scope of the university vis-à-vis the colleges. Most definitely the Oxbridge colleges have not yet become mere halls of residence offering their student an upmarket socio-cultural experience and little else, but even within the past 25 years their influence relative to the university has waned (Tapper & Palfreyman, 2000). Thus, any comparative analysis has to be sure that it is comparing like-with-like.

Within the context of its broad panacea, the American experience of collegiality has some interesting specific messages, which have implications for our more general understanding of the process of change in higher education. Whereas the American collegial tradition, while responding to the English heritage, evolved in response to what may be called local needs and conditions, the drive to establish collegiate universities is closely identified with the energy and passion of particular individuals: Blaisdell at Claremont, Kerr at the University of California, Wilson at Princeton and Lowell at Harvard. Although it is easy to claim that they failed in terms of the goals they may have wished to fulfil, it is impossible to deny their respective impacts upon, if not the American system of higher education (although Kerr shaped very significantly the pattern of higher education in California), a number of leading institutions. They have left behind legacies that have coloured important institutions as well as ideas about what should be the character of higher education – and not just higher education in America.

The drive to establish collegiate universities in the United States is more than the manifestation of the whims of powerful educational leaders. There is a clear interaction of historical context with differing interpretations of the idea of the university. The late nineteenth/early twentieth century rediscovery of the collegial tradition represented a reaction to the emerging dominance of research as the central purpose of the university, which post-1918 was reinforced by the negative reaction to all things German following World War I. Clark Kerr was driven not only by nostalgia for his Swarthmore days but also by the desire to see the University of California incorporate a tradition of higher education that was part of the American heritage. Santa Cruz was his attempt to embrace on one campus the commitment to quality undergraduate education, which would complement the University of California's commitment to cutting-edge research.

But ideas have to be put into effect, and the bolder the message, the greater the opposition that it is likely to encounter. Undoubtedly, Wilson remoulded the ethos of Princeton but failed to introduce his residential colleges because those who supported the established dining clubs were determined to protect their interests. It may come as something of a surprise, but attempts in the Progressive period to create residential colleges at Yale and Harvard failed because of the lack of financial resources. The defenders of established projects had no wish to have their budgets cut. It was not until the Harkness bequest that Yale was in a position to create its colleges and Harvard its houses (Rudolph, 1990: 460–461). And clearly the pressure of being but one campus within a leading multi-campus research university has

steadily eaten away at the early spirit of Santa Cruz. Thus change in higher education is not simply about propitious times, strong leadership and an appeal to the past but also about continuous power struggles within institutions representing different interests and contrasting visions of the university.

Historically the major challenge to the old-time college came with the rise of the research university stimulating an intermittent debate, which has waxed and waned ever since, on how best to sustain the traditional collegial values. Ryan, significantly in a review of Duke's *Importing Oxbridge*, has argued that the collegiate university represents a viable option for managing the tension between teaching and research within the university agenda.

> So long as there are institutions which, like Oxford and Cambridge, Yale, Harvard and Princeton and a very few others, try to reconcile the inevitable tensions between undergraduate and graduate teaching, and liberal education and technical research, there will be an argument about what institutional arrangements can best shelter those ambitions. The collegiate university is one answer to that problem (Ryan, 1997, December 12).

But this assertion completely fails to address Duke's central argument that Yale, Harvard and Princeton are *not* collegiate universities. Furthermore, it is difficult to see how the balance can be maintained given the dramatic shift towards the importance of research output in defining both institutional status and individual career paths. Incentives are required to sustain the balance between quality undergraduate teaching and world-class research, and the collegiate university within itself (as the contemporary soul searching at Harvard would illustrate) is no guarantee that this goal will be achieved. Collegial values will not disappear and invariably will manifest themselves in different contexts: in colleges incorporating both postgraduates and research faculty, in the research centres and in the laboratories. However, the two central pedagogical components of the collegial idea of the university – that undergraduate education is the core purpose of the university and that higher education is about developing the whole person and not simply the competently trained specialist – are, to put it mildly, on the defensive.

If the historical challenge to the idea of the college has come from developments within the academy itself, then the contemporary challenge is from the social basis of mass higher education. The demography of American higher education has changed. Levine and Cureton draw upon their survey data to conclude that,

> . . . higher education is not as central to the lives of today's undergraduates as it was to previous generations. Increasingly, college is just one of a multiplicity of activities in which they are engaged every day. For many, it is not even the most important of these activities; work and family often overshadow it (Levine & Cureton, 1998, May/June: 14).

There is an interaction of life style and cultural change in the lives of today's students, which means the American collegial tradition is retreating to what many would consider to be its heartland. Furthermore, even within the heartland the college may not exercise the same aura over its students or control the direction of their lives as it once did. If Rhoades' view of the past could be said to lack finesse, his implicit vision of the future is grounded in reality.

There are three scenarios to contemplate. The first is the retreat to the heartland thesis, which in the United States may mean the liberal arts colleges and in the United Kingdom the Oxbridge colleges (for a recent overview of the alleged decline in the centrality of undergraduate teaching in British universities, see Attwood, 2009, May 7). Second, the collegial tradition is resurrected in a form that appeals to institutional pride while placating, even playing to, market pressures. Evidently Harvard wants to be known as a university that takes undergraduate teaching seriously. Institutional pride cannot bear the thought that all the plaudits seem to be going to Princeton. Presumably, even students who have only a tangential relationship to their institutions will want to feel that their interests are being taken seriously and that the quality of the education they are receiving is worth the sacrifices they are making. Not all institutions are research-intensive, and even those in this league are rarely able to forget that students are potential alumni and, indeed, may have wealthy and well-connected parents who are already alumni.

Within the third scenario there is no dominant, still less permanent idea of the university, and that this is particularly true of the United States with its pluralist tradition of higher education and a system that has always been in historical flux. Within the context of mass higher education, wide institutional variation is the norm. There is no collegial heartland dependent upon its adherence to a particular understanding of higher education but rather varying models that reflect different institutional niches within the overall system. In this model it is not the commitment to particular values that determine an institution's character but rather its position in the marketplace. Values and institutional structure will change in response to market pressures.